

LORETTA SANCHEZ

46TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

WASHINGTON OFFICE  
1211 LONGWORTH BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0546  
(202) 225-2965  
(202) 225-5859 FAX

DISTRICT OFFICE  
12397 LEWIS STREET, SUITE 101  
GARDEN GROVE, CA 92840-4695  
(714) 621-0102  
(714) 621-0401 FAX

E-mail:  
Loretta@mail.house.gov

Website:  
www.house.gov/sanchez



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEES:  
RANKING MEMBER, TACTICAL AIR AND  
LAND FORCES  
STRATEGIC FORCES

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

SUBCOMMITTEES:  
BORDER AND MARITIME SECURITY  
CYBERSECURITY,  
INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION AND  
SECURITY TECHNOLOGIES

October 16, 2015

The Honorable Loretta Lynch  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Lynch,

It has been 30 years since the murder of Alex Odeh, an anti-discrimination activist killed on October 11, 1985 in a bombing in Santa Ana, California. Mr. Odeh, who served as the Western Regional Director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, was opening the doors of his office when a pipe bomb exploded, killing him and injuring several others.

I am introducing this case to you as I have sent several correspondences to then Attorney General Eric Holder in 2013, and the FBI in requesting a follow up on this open case. This case has been designated by the FBI as a terrorist attack on U.S. soil. The public deserves reassurance that all necessary efforts have been dedicated to address this breach of national security. The FBI's case into Alex Odeh's murder remains open and is classified as a "priority investigation."

I would also like to bring your attention to a recent Orange County Register article from October 10, 2015, which cites an FBI statement that the Alex Odeh case is the "oldest open counter-terrorism investigation we have." Given that statement from the FBI, I am requesting an additional update on what resources are dedicated to this open case. If the FBI knowingly admits that this is the oldest open counter-terrorism investigation they have on file, then we must ensure that justice delayed will not be justice denied. The Odeh family deserves closure.

I am also attaching past correspondence from my office to the Department of Justice, which requested answers to outstanding questions surrounding the investigation. I understand the sensitive nature of discussing an open case and my office remains open to hosting a closed briefing with your department.

The family of Alex Odeh, the Arab-American community, and all Americans are owed the pursuit of justice. Thank you for your consideration to our request and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

  
Loretta Sanchez  
Member of Congress

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 6, 2013

The Honorable Eric Holder  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder:

This letter follows as a reply to the July 11, 2013 letter from Deputy Assistant Attorney General Peter Kadzik's response to Representative Sanchez's June 7, 2013 request for an update on the case of Alex Odeh. Mr. Odeh was killed on October 11, 1985 - close to twenty-eight years ago, in Orange County, California. As you know, shortly after the death of Mr. Odeh the FBI characterized the incident as a domestic "terrorist attack."

We understand and respect the Department of Justice and FBI's policies of not releasing information regarding an ongoing investigation. However, this case has been designated by the FBI as a terrorist attack on U.S. soil and the public needs to reassure that all necessary efforts have been dedicated to address such a breach of our national security.

Given the information revealed 27 years ago during a hearing titled "Ethnically Motivated Violence Against Arab-Americans", held by the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice of the House Judiciary Committee, we request the answers to the following questions:

- 1) Can you provide us the names of suspects associated with responsibility for the death of Alex Odeh?
- 2) Do you know the whereabouts of any suspects associated with responsibility for the death of Alex Odeh? If so, where are they?
- 3) Has the FBI interviewed all of the suspects associated with responsibility for the death of Alex Odeh? If not, why not?
- 4) Is there or has there been any extradition process to bring all suspects who might be outside of the United States to the United States for prosecution or questioning with respect to responsibility for the death of Alex Odeh?

- 5) Is there any suspect associated with the death of Alex Odeh that the Justice Department has not successfully interviewed? If so, why have those suspects not been interviewed?

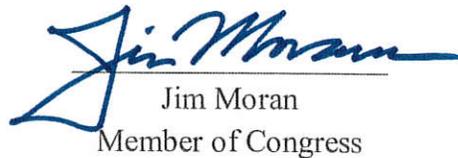
Your cooperation and prompt reply to this letter would be greatly appreciated. The family of Alex Odeh, including his wife Norma and their children and grandchildren as well as the American-Arab community throughout the United States and all Americans interested in the pursuit of justice in this case eagerly await your advice.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and we look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,



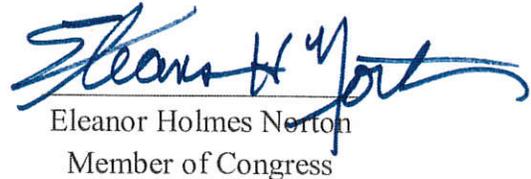
Loretta Sanchez  
Member of Congress



Jim Moran  
Member of Congress



Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress

# ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

## Family members, national groups push to solve 1985 Santa Ana terrorist attack case

By JESSICA KWONG

2015-10-10 12:47:55



SANTA ANA – Helena Odeh remembers going with her father Alex Odeh, then the West Coast regional director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, to his second-floor office on 17th Street in Santa Ana in the 1980s.

“His work was his life,” she said. “That’s what he stood for. He wanted peace.”

On Oct. 11, 1985, the morning after he appeared on local and national television praising Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat as “a man of peace,” Alex Odeh went to his office. As he unlocked and opened the door, a pipe bomb detonated, blowing off his legs.

“The ceiling has dropped. All the windows on the second floor are blown out. There is glass clear across the street. It looked like a tornado hit it,” Greg Lee, an attorney who witnessed the explosion from a building nearby, said in an Orange County Register article published the next day.

Alex Odeh died in surgery 2 1/2 hours after the blast at the age of 41.

Three decades later, one of Orange County’s earliest acts of terrorism remains unsolved. A reward of up to \$1 million the FBI announced in 1996 for information leading to any arrests or convictions remains, and Odeh’s family and Anti-Discrimination Committee members are using the anniversary this year to fuel a national movement seeking answers.

“I believe it is the oldest open counter-terrorism investigation we have,” said David Bowdich, assistant director of the FBI’s Los Angeles field office overseeing seven counties. “I’m not aware of anything on this scale that has occurred in Orange County since.”

Helena Odeh was 7 years old when her father died; her sisters, Samya and Susan, were 5 and 1, respectively. Sunday, the 30th anniversary of Alex Odeh’s assassination, his widow, Norma, and Samya will visit his grave – but Helena Odeh will stay home.

“I haven’t gone in years, just because it’s too painful for me,” Helena Odeh, 37, said. “I am the only one of my sisters who remembers my father. His touch, his voice – I’m the only one who remembers that, and when I see his face on the gravestone, it just kills me. It tears me up inside.”

Most of the family still lives in Orange County but didn’t want their city of residence published because of safety concerns.

Alex Odeh was born in the Palestinian village of Jifna and studied engineering at Cairo University in Egypt, but was unable to return home after the Six-Day War. The experience prompted him to pursue a political science degree instead.

He moved to the U.S. in 1972, and when he returned to Jifna three years later, he met and married Norma. They settled in Orange, and he served as a part-time professor of Middle East history and Arabic at Cal State Fullerton and Coastline Community College, while making peaceful relations in the Middle East his life goal.

That goal remains elusive today, and so too does closure in the Odeh case.

Thirty years with no information from the FBI except, "It's an ongoing investigation," is a long time for the Odeh family and the Arab-American community, said Lana Kreidie, president of the committee's Orange County chapter and a criminal defense attorney.

Investigators within a few years of the attack named three Jewish Defense League members as persons of interest, "and then you have crickets," she said. One of those men, Robert Manning, was later sentenced to prison for the 1980 bombing of a computer company in Manhattan Beach.

"We want transparency from the FBI, we want to know what they've done to follow up on these leads," said Kreidie, who encouraged Helena Odeh to join the local chapter's board. "We're not getting any closure."

Abed Ayoub, legal and policy director for the committee's national office in Washington, D.C., added: "Sadly, many feel that the life of a Palestinian American is not as valuable as another life. That's the perception that's being given, that an Arab life is not worth investigating and not worth taking action on."

But Bowdich said the FBI has not backed off on its efforts.

"Absolutely it's a cold case – it's 30 years old – but that doesn't mean it's sitting on a shelf somewhere in a box," he said on Friday. "As an organization we are very committed to hopefully bringing this case to a solution, apprehending those individuals that were involved."

Bowdich acknowledged that a working theory is a Jewish extremist group targeted Alex Odeh and "we're continuing down that path; we're just looking for that critical link to solve the case."

In 1997, vandals splattered red paint on a statue honoring Odeh outside of Santa Ana Public Library. That case, considered a hate crime, remains unsolved, too.

The FBI continues to reexamine evidence on the explosion and is looking at "new techniques" to determine if any more evidence can be generated to solve the case, Bowdich said.

"And the reward is out there," he said. "That has not been rescinded at all."

Meanwhile, ADC committee members continue pushing for justice for Alex Odeh with new efforts.

Out of Washington, D.C., the national committee and a diverse group of 25 civil and human rights organizations including the NAACP on Friday sent letters urging the U.S. Department of Justice and Congress to rededicate resources to the investigation. On the anniversary Sunday at 9 a.m. they are fronting a #Justice4AlexOdeh Twitter storm.

The committee's Orange County chapter is holding its annual memorial banquet, themed "Promoting Peace, Defeating Terrorism" this year, on Saturday at the Sheraton Park Hotel at the Anaheim Resort. Guests will participate in a letter-writing drive to defense leaders.

Knowing the FBI continues to pursue her father's case is important to Helena Odeh.

"It's been 30 years, and if I have to wait another 30 years to get a little answer, that's fine," she said. "I just want some kind of answer. I just want to know why, what was the reason?"

**Contact the writer:** 714-796-7762, [jkwong@ocregister.com](mailto:jkwong@ocregister.com) or on Twitter: [@JessicaGKwong](https://twitter.com/JessicaGKwong)